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FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD AND EUR/RPM  
OSD FOR WINTERNITZ, NSC FOR BRAUN

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SUBJECT: GOC ASKS FOR "AT LEAST 24 HOURS NOTICE" ON KOSOVO  
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Classified By: Rick Holtzapple, POL/ECON, Reasons 1.4 B/D

11. (C) Croatian Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Neven Pelicaric asked the Ambassador to see him on February 5 regarding Kosovo. Pelicaric stressed that the GoC remains committed to moving in concert with the EU and the US, and was consulting regularly with the other non-permanent UNSC EU members Belgium and Italy to stay informed. The MFA's lawyers had also reviewed the legal issues surrounding Kosovo's independence, and had concluded that there was no impediment to a country making the unilateral sovereign decision to recognize an independent Kosovo. He confirmed that Croatia intended to be "with or just behind the first wave" of countries recognizing Kosovo. Therefore, Pelicaric said he was preparing the legal procedure for Croatia's recognition. Recognition would not require any parliamentary procedure or the direct involvement of President Mesic, but it would require a government decision, and therefore require convening a cabinet session, and having the relevant documents prepared. In order to recognize quickly, Pelicaric asked for as much advance notice as the US could provide of a Kosovo declaration, and said that he would need "at least 24 hours" to set the wheels in motion.

12. (C) Pelicaric added that Croatia would also be supportive on other issues related to Kosovo. He was sensitive to the possibility that Russia might seek to convoke consultations at the UNSC upon any declaration of independence by Kosovo, and understood the US view that further UNSC debate was unnecessary. Croatia's diplomatic office in Pristina was now open, and headed by an ambassador-rank diplomat. Croatia also supported the establishment of the EULEX mission for Kosovo, and would likely contribute around 13-15 staff to that operation.  
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